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Rep. Slaughter Participates in Big Read Celebration, Calls for Greater Emphasis on Reading in American Culture

Washington, DC - Representative Louise M. Slaughter (D-Fairport), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee, addressed guests and read a passage from *To Kill A Mockingbird* at the National Endowment for the Arts' Big Read Celebration.

The Big Read is an NEA initiative designed to revitalize the role of reading in American culture and reintroduce the power of literature into our daily lives. The Big Read works with local partners across the country, including libraries, literary centers, city governments and many others, to encourage citizens to read for pleasure and enrichment.

“Reading forms a strong foundation for school learning, self-confidence, responsible citizenship, and productive employment. The Big Read Program is an innovative program that is advancing our ongoing efforts to promote reading in this country,” Rep. Slaughter said.

Congresswoman Slaughter, along with fellow Members of Congress Senator Norm Coleman and Representative Charles H. Taylor, participated by reading passages from their favorite books.

Rep. Slaughter read the following passage from Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*:

"Maycomb was an old town, but it was a tired old town when I first knew it. In rainy weather the streets turned to red slop . . . [s]omehow it was hotter then . . . bony mules hitched to Hoover carts flicked flies in the sweltering shade of the live oaks on the square. Men's stiff collars wilted by nine in the morning. Ladies bathed before noon, after their three-o'clock naps, and by nightfall were like soft teacakes with frostings of sweat and sweet talcum. . . . There was no hurry, for there was nowhere to go, nothing to buy and no money to buy it with, nothing to see outside the boundaries of Maycomb County. But it was a time of vague optimism for some of the people: Maycomb County had recently been told that it had nothing to fear but fear itself."

The NEA piloted the Big Read in ten cities across the country, including Buffalo, NY, in 2006. It plans to expand the Big Read into 150 communities and on military bases within the next year.

For more information about The Big Read visit <http://www.neabigread.org/>

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